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Cigarettes

NO PLANS TO BAN SMOKING AMONG MUSLIMS SAYS HAMID

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- The federal government has no plans to bar Muslims from smoking as it feels the best way to overcome the problem is through education, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, said today.

On the ruling of the Selangor and Kedah fatwa committees that smoking cigarettes was forbidden, he said the matter was within their jurisdiction.

"There are many matters in Islam that are forbidden, but rulings on them are not enforced as they can be overcome through education citing interest imposed by financial institutions. Interest is forbidden but financial institutions are now adopting the Islamic system of providing loans," he told reporters after attending the 10th session of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Coordination Committee of Joint Islamic Action in the Field of Dakwah here.

He felt a more appropriate approach was through education with the target group being children who could drop the habit when they become adults.

On the move of the Johor government to implement public whipping, he said next month's meeting of the National Council of Islamic Affairs would discuss the implications of implementing the law.

"We have to ensure that people will not be in a festive mood over the sufferings of those meted the punishment. We do not want the people to enjoy when one is undergoing the punishment," he said.

He said Pusat Islam was thinking of adopting a more aggressive approach towards deviationist groups, which appear to be increasingly active.

These would include holding dialogues with them.

On the speech of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the opening of the conference, Dr Abdul Hamid said delegates welcomed the call that dakwah activities be widened to cover non-Muslims. -- BERNAMA